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Introduction: Community, Empire and Migration - Problems of Identity among South Asians in Diaspora

Crispin Bates

But are we not all refugees from something? ... I was learning that human history is always a story of someone's diaspora: a struggle between those who repel, expel or curtail – possess, divide and rule – and those who keep the flame alive from night to night, mouth to mouth, enlarging the world with each flick of a tongue. [Romesh Gunsekera, *Reef*']

‘Communalism’ is a term used in India, but invented by colonial rulers in the nineteenth century, to refer to the use and manipulation of religious and/or ethnic differences for ‘political’ ends antithetical to the national (or colonial) interest. It is related to, but very different from, the idea of ‘community’. The solidarity of communities, at a local level, have been an important feature of Indian society since ancient times [Stein, 1998]. ‘Communalism’ however is predicated upon a non-local concept of community which developed, largely through political processes in the late colonial period. Arguably, the rise of ‘communalism’ was partly a reaction to the undermining of older, more local communities by rapid economic and social change. During the period of colonial occupation alternative outlets for popular unease and discontent included the Indian nationalist movement, but the division of this movement into Muslim, Hindu, Brahmin, non-Brahmin and other fractions, encouraged by the colonial power for strategic reasons, became a hall-mark of Indian politics and social life in the late colonial period, leading ultimately to Partition in 1947.

The secularist consensus established in the early years after Independence for a while promised a new future for India, which became known as ‘the world’s largest democracy’. In Pakistan and Sri Lanka by contrast, consensus on a national identity proved more elusive, and in all three countries during the 1980s and 1990s, economic and political dislocation has brought about the return of ‘ethnic’ and ‘communal’ conflict with a vengeance. Sri Lanka has seen the emergence of a vicious civil war between

‘Tamil’ and ‘Sinhalese’ fractions of the population, intensified greatly after the pogrom of Tamil residents in the southern capital of Colombo in 1983. In Pakistan, civil war initially led to the division of the country in 1971, and the emergence of Bangladesh in the former eastern half, whilst more recently conflicts in the western half between ethnic groupings and political representatives, of Punjabis, Baluchi, Pathans, Sindhis and Muhajirs (especially the two latter fractions), often expressed through armed insurgency, has weakened governments and justified continuing interventions in politics by the Pakistani military.

In India the decline of secularism, the decline of the Congress Party and the emergence of fundamentalist parties and organisations within India during the past decade has made communalism once more a prominent feature of life [Ludden 1990; Basu & Subramanyam 1996]. Communal conflicts in Assam, Punjab and Kashmir, exacerbated in the latter case by disputes with neighbouring Pakistan, have threatened not only the break up of the nation but even nuclear war. Communalism has also spread outwith the subcontinent, the political conflicts within India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka increasingly being found mirrored amongst the very substantial communities of Indians and Pakistanis living abroad.

The links between community and communal conflict, and community and nation, are thus crucial in the recent history of the Indian subcontinent. How the twentieth century’s conception of community and contemporary ideas of communalism first came about though remains an issue of considerable controversy. To contemporary sociologists studying community or ‘race relations’ (as they used to be referred to) in the United States, the Caribbean, Africa, the U.K. or Indian Ocean States such as Mauritius, the issue is often treated as unproblematic. It is assumed that the identities of migrant communities, say Indian Hindus or Pakistani Muslims, male and female, are largely brought with them, and that they are based upon primordial and age-old forms of identity to be found in the Indian subcontinent. The conflicts between these ‘communities’, and the expression of gender and caste differences, are then often accepted as inevitable or natural, and only its articulation and the choice of methods for its management and amelioration remains a cause for concern. The international activities of militant political and religious organisations such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad or Jammia Islamia are likewise predicated upon this assumption, that the interests and identities of Hindus and

Muslims everywhere are essentially the same. When looked at more closely however, and in comparative perspective, it soon becomes apparent that this is not the case: that to 'be a Hindu' in Leicester, in England, for example, is very different from 'being a Hindu' in Durban South Africa, and that even within the subcontinent the identities of, for example, Muslims in Bombay, and those in Hyderabad, Lucknow or Bangladesh are very different from one another. Likewise, the boundaries of their 'communities' and their relations with their neighbours of other 'communities', and the political articulation of these relationships, can vary enormously. Sometimes it is the cause of violent conflict (as say in Kashmir or Sri Lanka), whilst otherwise these relationship apparently unrecognised as issue of contention at all, as in Mauritius, which sees itself as an island community, in which the majority of the population arrived as migrants from the Indian subcontinent, but in which none of the 'communal' differences and tensions of the home country have survived. The essays in this volume attempt to address the validity and substance of these claims and differences of perception. They further examine the divergent historical circumstances that have led to these various outcomes, and examples of the widely varying identities of migrant communities both within South Asia and those scattered beyond the subcontinent in the former territories of Britain's colonial empire.

Community and Empire

Paul Brass and Asghar Ali Engineer are amongst many contemporary scholars keen to emphasis that ethnic identities are not primordial, arguing that ethnicity is never a given factor in identity formation but is always socially and politically constructed [Brass, 1991; Engineer 1985]. According to Brass, competing elites draw upon, employ and even fabricate myths, symbols and other elements from indigenous societies in order to fashion a rhetoric that will mobilise populations in pursuit of collective and individual advantages. The process is characteristically seen in the mobilising activities of both Muslim and Hindu elites in north India the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries [McLane 1977; Robinson, 1974] as well as in Sri Lanka in the same period [Wickramasinghe, 1995; this volume]. The modern centralized State plays a crucial role in this process, creating an arena in which ethnic nationalism can flourish. Some have even argued that nationalism and racism, as well as communalism, are indissolubly linked, being part of the process by which modern capitalist economies manage and control their populations, respond to crises, and control the remuneration and size of the

work. 'Racism is constantly emerging out of nationalism' Etienne Balibar has written, 'not only towards the exterior but towards the interior... And nationalism emerges out of racism, in the sense that it would not constitute itself as the ideology of a 'new' nation if the official nationalism against which it were reacting were not so profoundly racist' [Balibar, 1991, p. 53].

In the colonial context, the inadequacy of democratic structures renders elite leadership all the more important, and efforts by the colonial power to avert the emergence of a united front amongst indigenous elites (the strategy of 'divide and rule'), gave further encouragement to the emergence of a multiplicity of ethnic nationalisms. In Africa, the institutions of indirect rule were built upon an assumption by the colonial power that African society was already divided into such ethnic fractions, a theory which then frequently assumed the power of self-fulfillment. 'Everywhere the local apparatus of the colonial state was organised on an ethnic or religious basis' [Mamdani, 1996, p. 24]. By empowering certain specified loyal elites colonial regimes created a practical locus for political activity, even in acephalous west African communities where no such point of focus of power and loyalty had previously existed [Vail, ?? ; Lema, 1993].

'[A]partheid, usually considered unique to South Africa, is actually the generic form of the colonial state in Africa. As a form of rule, apartheid is what Smuts called institutional segregation, the British termed indirect rule, and the French association. It is this common state form that I call decentred despotism' [Mamdani, 1996, p.8]

A key basis for the division of indigenous sovereignty in Africa was the idea of customary law. Land rights everywhere, for example, were treated as collective rather than individual and every colony had two legal systems, one modern and the other customary, to uphold these rights. Power in customary affairs was then vested in local 'Native Authorities', composed of a hierarchy of 'chiefs'. The consequence of this system was a proliferation of representative authorities and their dependent communities, creating enormous obstacles to the mobilisation of the population against colonial rule. The anti-colonial struggle, when it did erupt, was then often in its earliest stages directed against these Native institutions rather than the European authorities which sponsored them.

In India, a similar phenomenon can be observed. Caste, tribe and Indian aristocracy were here the bulwarks of customary rule, with zamindars and other feudal elites being invested with unusual powers, a separation of public and private law being enforced (with religious precepts being the foundation of the former), and the use of caste and tribe as instruments of imperial management and control through enactments such as the criminal tribes legislation of the 1870s [Robb, 1996; Nigam 1990, Cohn, 1983]. But divisions were not only promoted willfully by the colonial government. Class played an important role too in generating rivalry and conflict out of social and religious differences. Thus not only nationalism, but rapid economic change in the late nineteenth century played a part in the emergence of rival caste associations, and revivalist and reform movements amongst both Hindus and Muslims [Pandey, 1990, pp. ??]. In 1909, 1918 and 1935 the British began to exploit these movements and the conflicts that sometimes resulted from them by institutionalising so-called communal differences in successive extensions of the franchise. Separate electorates were created for Hindus, Muslims, Untouchables and Adivasis, making it very difficult for nationalist politicians to unify these sections of society in the struggle against colonialism. So successful was the British policy that it took forty years of struggle before India finally won independence and in the final denouement it was only then possible with the partition of the subcontinent into a Hindu majority India and a Muslim majority Pakistan.

British policies in this period though were not entirely strategic and cynical, as might be assumed. As in the African case, they were built upon a highly developed epistemology and body of knowledge. Amongst these ideas resulting were the Aryan race theories of nineteenth century orientalist, and related developments in physical anthropology and linguistics at the end of that century [Bates, 1996; Cohn, 1996; Said, 1993]. By such means the colonial gaze hierarchically arranged subject peoples into groups according to their origins and physical characteristics. The conclusions of these studies upheld in every case, what Partha Chatterjee has referred to as 'the rule of colonial difference' [Chatterjee P. 1997]. Central was the belief that whilst European values, rights and reason were Universally applicable, enabling the European to know, and to govern, the colonised countries of Africa and Asia, this same apparatus of knowledge also affirmed the exceptional nature of these societies and their constituent populations. 'One of the fundamental elements in the colonial conception of India as a "different" society was the fixed belief that the population was a *mélange* of communities' [Chatterjee, P. 1997, p.

223]. As a consequence, it was argued, while certain European legal principles and administrative procedures could be applied, others (such as representative democracy) could not, or only in specially adapted forms.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century race and the idea of racial difference, together with their constituent elements, the supposedly wholly endogamous castes and tribes of Africa and Asia, were generally the most important elements in colonial understanding and administrative arrangements. But as race theories were undermined by scientific scepticism, facilitated by the end of slavery, global migration, and the later genocidal conflicts in Europe, new ideas of culture and ethnicity came to take their place. Modernisation, or the lack of it, was one reason for the slowness of colonial regimes to give up control. Colonial government as development administration became the fashion, beginning with schemes of imperial preference in the 1930s, but most particularly after World War Two. The lack of appropriate institutions, both of civil and political society, was another excuse often advanced for the absence of democracy, and so it was that rights and liberties came to be given only in stages and in varying degrees throughout the colonial empires from the 1900s onwards. Curiously therefore, while British legal principles, such as habeas corpus, were declared as universal rights, and Westminster, 'the mother of all Parliaments' was upheld as the model for all to follow, very few parts of the British empire enjoyed the benefits of these gifts, and for the most part only those in which white settlers were a majority of the population (Canada and Australia) [Tinker, 1976]. Rules of colonial difference thus persisted, the colonised societies were regarded as throw-backs to an extinct European past, and as soon as race theories explaining this phenomenon abated, new sociological ideas arose to take their place and to justify the separate and unequal treatment of imperial subjects. Foremost amongst these was the notion of the 'Plural Society'. First fashioned to justify and explain Dutch policy in the colony of Indonesia [Furnivall, 1945], the theory was developed and extended, to Africa and the Caribbean [Smith 1965; Kuper & Smith ??], and many other situations, although uncommonly so in the metropolitan societies of the West until at least the end of the twentieth century. Typically, the theory presented 'developing' colonial societies as the mirror image of the West. Western societies were seen as organic and unified, consensual normative systems in the words of Talcott Parsons, with highly developed institutions of civil and political society and a common value system.

Unities of course can only be understood by contrasting them with their opposites, and the 'Other' in the theory of Plural Societies was located more often than not in the Africa and Asia. Here 'developing' societies were depicted as fractured into their constitutive social elements, their various societies or communities living side by side in economic symbiosis but mutual avoidance, the only unity being that imposed by the colonial powers. The plural society was 'a unit of disparate parts', owing its existence to external factors, and 'lacking a common social will' [Smith, 1965, p.vii] . This then gave the colonial government an important role not only in maintaining order, but in arbitrating these differences. Rather than leave the matter to democracy, the law, and majority rule (as in the United Kingdom), or the same, plus a constitution and a bill of rights (as in the United States), or any other number of possible solutions, colonial governments took upon themselves the responsibility of balancing the interests of what they perceived to be the various fractions within the population. Hence the policy of separate representation for different religious or ethnic communities, and the institutionalisation of procedures for consultation with 'community leaders' in legislative councils and local authorities, rather than effective, representative self-government (a practice followed to this day in the U.K.²). At independence, countries as diverse as India, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Cyprus and Fiji, were then left with constitutions which enshrined this idea, these constitutions remaining in force for a considerable time with little modification, in some cases, such as Mauritius, almost unchanged to this day. As with the policies of indirect rule in Africa, constitutions enshrining the idea of a 'plural society' frequently created the very social atomism and rivalry which they sought to contain. And when competition and rivalry erupt into violence this creates a further sense of distance and the process of division is complete [Tambiah 1996].

There is always of course a psychological element, and the outcome of colonial policies of divide and rule were never as predictable as the above narrative suggests. The process of decolonisation was also an exercise in voluntarism, in which colonial subjects exercised agency and attempted to undermine the hegemony of colonial power and colonial ideas of order and social relationship. Our view of post-colonial identity, however, is still very largely borrowed from Benedict Anderson [1991], whose path-breaking study of nationalism established a framework of analysis that has been widely influential and largely followed ever since. The problem with the Andersonian framework is that it too closely resembles the colonial conditions which it contemplates.

Implicitly Anderson assumes that capitalism and empire are global phenomenon which reproduce themselves in a predictable fashion and with largely predictable consequences. Third World nationalism therefore can all too easily be seen as a mere imitation of, or reaction to, the precedents set in the first industrial societies and imperial nations of Europe. In one way or another European experience over determines all, and the possibility of truly 'postcolonial' expressions of community and nation are largely over ruled. The outcome is an image of third world nationalism not far removed from the framework set for it by the British Montague-Chelmsford reforms in India as far back as 1918. In the case of India this leaves us stuck with conceptions of caste, tribe and religious community inherited from the days of the Raj, as if no other possibility of existence existed and as if Indian sociology had not advanced one jot in more than a century (some would say even for a thousand years).

Dissatisfaction with current thinking on the idea of community has been expressed by a number of South Asian anthropologists, historians and political scientists: these include Bernard Cohn [1987] and Ronald Inden [1990] who have applied historical insights to their critique of the social categories Indian anthropology; Ranajit Guha in his reinterpretation of the meanings of peasant communities in Elementary Aspects [1983]; and Partha Chatterjee [1997], in his critique of contemporary theorisation of the formation of national identities from a third world perspective. It is undoubtedly a mistake to overly concentrate on the superficial articulations of the political process, as Chatterjee argues, and in his critique of Anderson:

'If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain "modular" forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine?' [Chatterjee 1997, p. 5].

Similar anxieties are shared by the contributors to this volume, most notably by John Kelly, with whose essay this volume opens. Partha Chatterjee's The Nation and its Fragments has been to date perhaps the most influential of these authors. Whilst some might differ from aspects of Chatterjee's narration of South Asian history, and others may balk, for example, at his interpretation of jati as the building block of Indian society, there can be few who will dispute his honest plea for 'fuzzier' thinking on the issue of community that might avoid the crude conjunction of ethnicity, state and nation that characterises much of present-day theorisation on the subject. In particular, as Kelly

stresses, the Andersonian idea of a nation, as a single community, imagining itself to monopolise a social space, representing itself to itself and to others, is an exceptional form of nationalism rather than the norm, and is something we need to get away from in our thinking about community and identity

Community and Migration

Migration is sometimes put forward as being amongst the fundamental causes of communalism: leading to the 'mixing' of naturally exclusive communities which might not otherwise normally be found in such close proximity to one another [see for example Weiner, 1988]. Such a view depends however upon a typically essentialised view of South Asian communities, and it might alternatively be argued that if migration is indeed a determining factor this may be simply because dislocation promotes insecurity. This perhaps explains why those who have moved furthest from India - those South Asians living in Europe North America for example, who have been extensively studied - often appear historically to have been most politicised and defensive of their identities, even to the point of violence. Examples include the Ghadrtees in Canada and the U.S.A. in the 1900s and the Indian community in South Africa, which was the first to mobilise against colonial rule under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.³ These same communities are more prosperous than those they have left behind in India and sometimes more prosperous than those amongst whom they live, which tends to undermine the simplistic explanation of 'communalism' as class conflict writ large (though economics often enters into it). However, such communities of Indians abroad are beleaguered in other senses - being numerically in a minority and culturally marginalised in the societies in which they live, as well as perhaps being forced more often on a daily basis to face the extremes of 'white' racism. Within the Indian Ocean region though, communities of migrant Indians are to be found numerically and culturally in a majority, or at least in significant numbers, such as in Mauritius and Sri Lanka. Both societies are prosperous. Quite why then communal conflict should erupt in one and not in the other remains a paradox.

Even closer to the Hindu heartland of north India, in cities like Calcutta and Bhopal, migrant communities are sometimes able to integrate seamlessly into the societies in which they are placed. At other times they apparently suffer irreconcilable differences with their neighbours from whom they are religiously, culturally or ethnically distanced.

By focusing on the issue of migrancy as a factor, insights may be gained into the genesis of communal conflict. In the process, it is important that attention is also paid to the many cases in which migrant identities have developed in the absence of rivalry and conflict, and where new non-confrontational, and sometimes syncretic. traditions have emerged.

Issues of identity amongst migrant South Asians have perhaps been most thoroughly addressed in the metropole of the former British empire – the United Kingdom. The U.K. contains one of largest communities of South Asians living abroad in the developed world, and it has been the subject of considerable sociological interest [Clarke 1991, Ballard 1995]. Discussion has usually taken place within the framework of so-called ‘race’ relations., but it has more lately broadened out to address a variety of other issues, including health, marriage, housing, gender and employment. Studies of identity amongst migrant South Asian communities elsewhere however are few and far between. There are moves towards this in R. K. Jain [1993] and in Robin Cohen’s recent *Global Diasporas*, [1997], but perhaps the only genuinely comparative and interdisciplinary attempt has been the outcome of conference organised in Pennsylvania University by Peter Van der Veer [1995]. Migrancy and migrant identities within the Indian subcontinent are yet poorly addressed, whilst studies of the Indian communities in the Caribbean, Mauritius, Fiji and Africa, have invariably tended to focus on the economic dimension: the nature of plantation economies and the various systems of indenture or trade which brought them there in the first place [e.g. Daniel V. et al 1992].

The interconnectedness between the labour markets of developing economies and those of the developed world has, nonetheless, long been the focus of interest amongst both sociologists and historians of Africa, Asia and Latin America. A pioneer in what since became known as the field of ‘new’ international labour studies was Robin Cohen. His book Peasants and Proletarians: the struggles of Third World Workers, co-authored with Gutkind and Brazier and published in 1979, set the trend for much that followed. Path-breaking in its linkage of contemporary class struggles in the third world with long-term historical trends, the focus was nonetheless on the processes which have affected the mobility of capital and labour internationally, and rather less on the ways in which workers participated actively in the shaping of their destinies and the cultural, and political consequences of these migrant labour movements.⁴

Initially the field of migration studies was dominated by contemporary sociologists of labour in the developing world. There has since been a greater convergence between the two disciplines involved in this enterprise - history and sociology. However, the historians have typically addressed migration as a symptom of economic change, and said very little or nothing at all about the problems of ethnicity and the changing identity of migrants that have resulted over time. The interest of Sociologists in migration, on the other hand, if not concerned with the economics of the phenomenon, largely revolved around the problems of 'Race relations' within Western economies which have been the final destination of migrant streams. They have neglected the far greater movements of people that have gone on within the developing world, and have concentrated on problems of identity as they have emerged through the relationships between immigrant communities and their 'white' neighbours, ignoring the tensions that exist for example between Sunni and Shia Muslims, between Muslims and Hindus, between high caste and low caste Hindus, and between Africans and Asians, and only exceptionally of late [Wilson 1987], have they begun to address the issue of gender (a dimension within which in all fields adequate research is still lacking).

Robert Miles in Capitalism and Unfree Labour [1987] neatly inverted the traditional concerns of the Race Relations industry, by arguing that racial and ethnic conflict was not a side-effect of international migration, but a fundamental characteristic, especially where unequal contracts such as the indenture contract (which prevent the free operation of market forces) are in use. Even Miles' study however failed to make adequate use of international comparisons. Like others, his primary concern is with migration from the developing world to the developed, and little attention is paid to the occurrence of similar tensions resulting from migration streams within the developing world itself and the examples and exceptions thereby presented.

This book attempts to begin to fill these gaps by asking a wide range of experts in the field of migration studies, both historians and anthropologists, all of them engaged in new research in the field, to focus, not on the economic causes and effects of migration streams, but on the problems of identity, ethnic conflict and the changing self-identification of migrants that have resulted. The studies themselves are all drawn from atypical contexts, most often from locations within the developing world, from places such as East Africa, Sri Lanka and Fiji. The hope thereby is to throw new light on

problems of identity and ethnic conflict amongst migrant communities, by drawing upon international comparisons and by combining both anthropological and historical perspectives.

Migrant cultures and ‘Postcolonial’ identities

A consistent conclusion, noticed in the work of contributors to this volume, concerns the apparent adaptability of migrant communities and the ease with which their identities have often integrated or otherwise transformed to meet the pressures of different circumstances - a possibly optimistic outcome in an era where identities, particularly religious identities, are increasingly regarded as intransigent and irreconcilable with one another. John Kelly in his contribution brings this theme very much to the fore, by charting the history of Fijian migrant identity from ‘coolie’ to ‘Indian’, and the resistance of Indian population to the communal space carved out for them by the British. Kelly does this in an unusual way, seeking to challenge the normative assumption that third world identities must be either in imitation or reaction to European exemplars, whilst urging the case for a more complex, ‘post-Andersonian’ perspective on the nature of communities.

As Kelly explains, Fiji became a British colony in 1874 when leading Fijian chiefs signed a deed of cession. But they were soon though threatened with becoming a minority in their own island, since Fiji’s migrant Indians accounted for 46% of the population by 1946. Most arrived under indenture contracts to meet the needs of the island’s burgeoning sugar industry. The Fijian indentured labourers were described as ‘coolies’ by the British, but referred to themselves as girmitiyas, from the word ‘girmit’ or agreement, referring to the indenture contract⁵. From the very beginning ethnic Fijian and Indian populations were spatially separated, a practice commonly followed in British colonies, ostensibly to manage, but in practice more often affirming colonial preconceptions of racial difference. After 1936 Fijian and Indian ‘communities’ were also differentially represented politically, as the administration included members from the ‘Indian’ community within a limited programme of self-government, in an effort to encourage continue Indian immigration following the abolition of indenture in 1910. This had been against the wishes of the short-lived Fiji Indian National Congress, who wanted a ‘common roll’, regardless of race, an idea that was opposed by London, until they began to fear the possibility of a break-away by the white settlers in Fiji, as they were already experiencing

in Kenya, at which point the notion suddenly gained support. Ultimately though the common roll idea was abandoned and the typical colonial fashion of representation by community was adopted, with five Fijian chiefs in the legislature, against three elected 'Europeans', three elected 'Indians', plus two additional officially appointed representatives for the Indians and another two officially appointed representatives for the Europeans – thus creating a highly undemocratic 'balance' that would nonetheless favour colonial interests.

Unionisation of the sugar workers soon followed, and this, together with growing size of the migrant community created a sense of unease amongst native Fijians who sought to re-assert communal separation and their constitutional preponderance, as they saw it, according to the terms of the Deed of Cession. These anxieties culminated after the outbreak of World War II when the Fijian chiefs re-affirmed their loyalty, and partnership with the colonial government, by offering recruits to fight in Africa or Egypt, whilst the Indians engaged in strike action against the Australian monopsony sugar milling company, CSR. The British declared sugar to be an essential war-time commodity, and the scene was set for a confrontation that surprisingly however, never took place. After a heated debate, the Central Indian War Committee refused to condemn the War (unlike the Indian National Congress in India), and when called upon by the government to organise a volunteer labour corps, voted to disband itself rather than either back or confront the government. At the same time A.D. Patel ('the Fijian Gandhi') and Swami Rudrananda, who led the growers strike, refused to accept the role of representing Indian interests versus those of the Fijians and the colonial government. Patel offered instead to gift the sugar cane harvested by the growers to the government, rather than accept the status quo, in which Indian prices were controlled and Indian small holders were remunerated at derisively low rates by the CSR. And when this gift was rejected, rather than provoke further confrontation, Patel and Swami Rudrananda, simply ordered their followers back to work.

The situation completely contrasted that in India, where defiance of the colonial government and conflict with its communal allies was the hall-mark of Indian nationalism in the 1940s. Kelly explains this by arguing that the indentured migrants, did not generally think of themselves as 'Indians' before they arrived in Fiji. Oral evidence suggests that caste and even religious identification was extremely uneven from one

sugar estate to the next. 'These "Indians" were not only not "Indians" in self-conception upon arrival; they learned additional, new dimensions of social connection and difference from the indenture experience itself.' Their identities were thus numerous and overlapping and did not allow them to fall easily into the stereotyped roles cast for them either by British or Fijian politicians. Ultimately however the separation of communities was reinforced through the 1946 Deed of Cession debates in the Fijian Legislative Council, the terms of which have framed every constitutional debate and amendment in Fiji ever since. The ethnic Fijian chiefs further overhauled the 'Native Regulations' in 1944, tying the indigenous or ethnic Fijians more tightly than ever to their natal villages. These separations, ethnic, spatial and constitutional, were maintained against the wishes of Indian representatives, who chose the path of inaction, rather than assert a unified 'Indian' identity and allow it precedence over all others.

'In the face of flat government refusal to discuss equity, in the face of a Government using the war emergency to introduce new, newly naked codes of racial difference in wages, the Indo-Fijian simply refused to represent themselves, if representing themselves meant accepting and extending the organization of a fixed racial position.'

Kelly implies that the Indo-Fijians were moving at the time, and have presumably continued to do so since, towards a new form of 'postcolonial' identity. This is not a hybrid identity of the sort described by some Caribbean historians, which involves an element of synthesising and progressivist teleology, but an identity located outside the framework of colonial discourse, somewhere akin to the 'the third space' described by Homi Bhabha [19??], or the concept of 'the Void' suggested by the Caribbean critic Wilson Harris [Harris 19??; Moore-Gilbert 1997, p.183]. Kelly emphasises however that this identity was not an merely attempt by Indo-Fijians to represent themselves, in a Saidian symbolic, semiotic sense (which fits too easily with Anderson's modernisation theory of the origins of the nation state), 'but to seek leverage and varieties of alternative, the paths that really scared the Europeans'. Far from being a 'teeming' horde determined to 'take over' Fiji, as they were depicted, Indo-Fijians were in practice highly ambivalent about their role, and as uncomfortable with the place created for them by the colonial power as they were with the identities imported by Arya Samajists and others from India. As Kelly puts it 'if we really want to study the whole politics of imagined community, we should also study attempts to evade its impositions', and he finds evidence for this in the Fijian case where he argues that a constant in the history of the 'Indian Problem' is the

effort ‘to move away from a colonial hierarchy of peoples, efforts in the first place not to be the “Indians” of the British imagination’.

Kelly thus demonstrates that an important role was played at a certain level by politics, and by British policies, in the development of Indo-Fijian identity, but he also argues that this identity was elective, that Fijian Indians could assert their agency and choose not to accept the political and social role carved out for them by the British, indeed, to reject a political role altogether when one acceptable to them could not be achieved. Clear parallels are to be seen here with the periodic attempts at collaboration between South African Indians and Africans described by Ravi Thiara (see below), despite the pressures from government, and the historical traditions suggesting otherwise. This view of Fijian identities is thoroughly historicised, and is hardly the root-less post-modern construction that Ari Nave alleges it to be. By contrast Ari Nave, in his essay in this volume, whilst insisting that History has played its part in the creation of Mauritian identities, does not describe this process in any detail. Instead, the definition of the communities given in the British-designed constitution are presented as a more or less accurate representation of communal differences, and it is then explained in a largely synchronic fashion, and with reference to game theory, why it is to the advantage of communities so-defined to continue operate within these limits. Nave’s account concentrates on the achievement of ends by social actors, and why they should aim towards consensus in doing so, but it remains to be explained how the social boundaries of Mauritius came into existence in the first place, and how they came to be accepted here without, apparently, much in the way of controversy and debate, and not so elsewhere. The chapter concludes with a few clues, whilst admitting it is still something of a quandary as why Mauritius should remain relatively harmonious, even with the help of its peculiar constitutional arrangements.

A notable curiosity of Mauritian society is that while the island is apparently divided on ethnic and religious grounds, the supposedly ‘Hindu’ fraction of the population has a great number of original customs and practices (some of them syncretic), quite different from those seen in the Indian subcontinent, with whom otherwise links and commonalities are considered so important⁶. The so-called ‘castes’ in Mauritius in particular are quite unrecognisable from a sub-continental perspective, and apparently often lump together a mutually antagonistic castes from an Indian setting into a single group. Thus, by contrast with India, Rajputs are seen as low caste, the title having been

usurped by former low caste Bihari immigrants in the nineteenth century. The terms Hindu and 'Indiane' refer exclusively to north Indian Hindus. Migrants from Tamilnad call themselves Tamils and never identify themselves as 'Hindus'. Many other so-called castes too, such as the 'Bengali' derive solely from a linguistic or regional association, as do the 'Marathis'. Gujaratis are also seen as a separate community, whilst the former Brahmin elite are referred to as the 'Marars' and lack the pre-eminence they might be expected to enjoy from an Indian perspective.

The Vaish, otherwise known as 'the Babujis' (who see themselves as Kshatriyas), are the largest and most influential caste group on the island. Internally the group is divided into Koeri, Kurmi, Kahar, Ahir, Lohar jatis, the first four being the most important. No-one apparently will describe themselves as 'low caste' or sudra (by contrast with India), although the term Chamar might sometimes be used to describe others. In the past many admitted to Chamar status (as shown by historical records), but recently this seems to have become completely taboo. An explanation may lie in the rapid economic growth of the past twenty years, as well as the lack of positive discrimination measures of the sort seen in India (There are obvious parallels here with the well documented Sanskritisation movements in prosperous commercial regions of India in the recent past.)

Mauritian Muslims, by contrast with the 'Hindus', will often not admit to coming from India at all, connecting instead with a broader Islamic identification, whilst Tamils who came as slaves or skilled free labourers in the eighteenth century today see themselves as Christians and will only marry other Christians. Only the creoles apparently are lacking in prohibitions about marrying people of mixed origins.

Because of their numerical preponderance, the Prime-minister has so far always been a Vaish. All 'communities' though are represented in the cabinet, even if a majority of supporters in the different parties are simply Vaish. Whatever their formal constituency every political party makes a point of inducting Vaish members at some point, whilst the main Hindu parties all have to be led by Vaish if they are to stand any chance of electoral success. By one means or another, therefore, the majority community asserts its influence and control, even if formally the constitution attempts to effect a balance between their interests and those of other groups, and privately this is often resented.

A possible future that could have overcome Mauritius is to be seen in the case of Sri Lanka. Here ethnic divisions defined and imposed in a constitutional settlement by the British in the process of decolonisation were initially accepted, but they went on to become a source of intense controversy and conflict. Nave rather implies, in keeping with the description of the Mauritian tourist authority, that such conflict does not exist in Mauritius. But there certainly have been periods of serious disharmony in Mauritian society in the twentieth century, beginning with rivalry between the elite Franco-Mauritian Parti de l'Ordre and the first creole/Indo-Mauritian party, L'Action Liberale at the beginning of the century, which campaigned for an improvement in conditions for the labourers on sugar plantations. Other measures proposed by a Royal Commission in 1909, including the ending of indenture and the introduction of income tax, were vigorously opposed by the Franco-Mauritian elite, and riots and incidents of sabotage occurred during the course of the elections in 1911 (held on an extremely limited franchise).

The response of the British colonial government, as in India, was to manage popular demands through a strictly limited system of representation according to enumerated communities, with elected members being outnumbered by officials and official nominees in the island's legislative council. Thus in the early 1930s when the constitution of the island was remodeled in response to unrest provoked primarily by the depression the Council of Government still had eight ex-officio members, only ten elected members, and nine nominated members, including six non officials. Unsurprisingly this reform did little to placate popular unrest and in 1936 the Labour Party was founded by Dr. Maurice Curé to address the problems of the island's labourers and which, along with the Independent Forward Bloc, founded by Sookdeo Bissoondoyal in 1958, began the campaign for independence. The Parti Mauricien Social Democrate (PMSD) represented the Franco-Mauritians, but began also to recruit 'Coloured creole' members out of fear of the growing power of the Labour Party. Although the island's assembly had a majority of elected representatives (nineteen) by 1948, and the vote had been extended to every literate member of the population, there were still three official members and twelve nominees by the colonial government, representing the various 'communities', as defined by the colonial administration. Unsurprisingly, the continuation of this system meant that representation by community, even after the advent of party politics, became the accepted political practice in Mauritius. The absence of a Muslim member in 1948 thus led to a

campaign for the election of a Muslim candidate, which succeeded in 1953 with the election of Abdool Razack Mohamed, who set up the Comité d'Action Musulman to agitate for constitutional reform to 'safeguard' the interests of Muslims – to which unsurprisingly the government acceded. Simultaneously, the All-Mauritius Hindu Congress was formed to uphold the 'interests' of the island's Hindu population [Mannick, 1989].

Rather late in the day the proposal was made in 1957 at a constitutional conference in London that representation should not be on the grounds of race or religion, but solely on the basis of party and principal. This idea though was abandoned and the island was divided in 1958 into forty single member constituencies, elected on a crude first past the post basis, with the Governor appointing twelve additional members to the Legislative Council in proportion to the 'communities' in the electorate (including one for the Muslims) who had failed to achieve representation. In 1964, the Legislative Council was renamed the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council was renamed the Council of Ministers, and took over responsibility for the day to day management of the colony from the British governor. Dissent continued however with the PMSD opposing independence and running a virulent campaign against what they depicted as the danger of 'Hindu domination'. This led ultimately to a series of clashes at Trois Boutiques between Hindus and creole PMSD members and a state of emergency on the island was declared immediately prior to independence in 1968.

The electoral process ultimately adopted, with three members per constituency elected on the British first past the post system, combined with a distribution of seats to the 'best losers' from parties representing 'communities' that had failed to win a place, established the system of representation still in place today. And it was only the experience of violent confrontation that persuaded the PMSD under the leadership of Gaetan Duval to drop its communalist stance (although the party split on the issue) and to seek an alliance with the Labour Party following independence. Arguably, even then, it was mainly the subsequent rise of a serious common enemy in the Marxist and highly popular trade union based Mouvement Militant Mauricien (founded by Paul Bérenger in 1969), and the ideology of MMM itself, that helped keep the communal peace thereafter.

We know from Scott [1985], that social and political conflict need not present itself in organised, violent or insurrectionary forms, but can still be significant. Arguably what has happened in Mauritius since 1968 is that since a formal accord has been arrived at to keep it at bay in the political sphere, communal conflict has simply been driven underground and into the small scale rivalries of day to day life. Small-scale examples of this are to be found in the Cola Wars and the so-called 'loup-garou' (werewolf) controversy of the late 1980s. Competition between soft drink manufacturers is common the world over, but in Mauritius the Pepsi franchise is owned by the Muslim Gujarati Currimjee family, and as a result many Muslim retail outlets sell only Pepsi and at Muslim functions only Pepsi is served. Biryani (a traditional Muslim dish), it is said, 'goes best with Pepsi', which thus has a unique place in the commensal rites of this community. Even Middle class Hindus are aware of this, although they would deny that this was a reason for their not drinking Pepsi since that would be 'communal'. They just say it 'tastes bad', and disparage its use. The Coca-Cola franchise, by contrast, is owned by a Hindu family and is distributed in all Hindu retail outlets and is the preferred carbonated soft drink of this community. In their daily lives therefore Hindus and Muslims on the island know by their constitution that they belong to different fractions of society, and whilst prevented from doing so in Parliament, they act out a communal conflict in trivial aspects of their daily lives. Such differences only assume more serious proportions when there is an apparent threat to livelihood or life and limb. In the wake of cyclone Hollanda in February/March 1994 such a threat existed, as while communications were disrupted and the island was without electricity for several weeks, there were a spate of robberies and violent assaults. As it became apparent that the police were unable (or, allegedly, unwilling), to apprehend the perpetrator, the rumour spread that a loup-garou, or werewolf, going by the name of Touni-Minuit, was on the loose: apparently a respectable member of the community by day, but perpetuating terrible crimes under the cover of darkness. Mistrustful of the authorities, armed groups of Muslim vigilantes were formed to patrol the streets in Muslim majority precincts, which for a while became no-go areas for local Hindus. The rumour died out only when the 'loup-garou' started telephoning people late at night to warn them they were coming, and the tabloid newspapers found a new set of stories to occupy them.

Contrary to the example of Hosay in the Caribbean, as described by Mohapatra [1996?], the communal divide in Mauritius is further evident in the exclusive disposition of

religious festivals: although they celebrate diwali and holi, for Tamils 'their' main festival is Taipoosam Cavadee. Like the Marathas in India the so-called 'Marathis' of Mauritius concentrate on celebrating the festival of Ganesh Chaturti (?), the Telugus shun this occasion (even though Ganesh is a god to all Hindus) and celebrate Ougadi, while the Chinese confine their celebrations to the New Year and the Christians to toussaint (all saints day), the Muslims celebrating id. All have been recognised as public holidays and prominent politicians make a point of attending them all (as in India) in order to advertise their lack of favouritism, at least in public. The public themselves though rarely transgress the boundaries between these different events.

Whilst seemingly trivial, the cola wars and loup garou examples; the distinctness of religious festivals; and the persistence of endogamous marriage practices on the island described by Nave, confirm the profound and quotidian nature of communal differences on the island of Mauritius. The fact that this did not break through into political discord in the 1970s, was a reaction to violence that had already taken place and the rise of a left-wing movement in the MMM on the back of a wave of strike action and determinedly advocating a politics of class. The accession of the MMM to power in 1982, however, proved to be a debacle, as the party split due to a conflict of personalities between the MMM leader, Paul Berenger and the Primeminister, Aneerood Jugnauth, who formed his own Hindu majority party, the Mouvement Socialiste Mauricien. Communal voting patterns then re-emerged in the election of 1983, with the MMM being forced into opposition: despite winning a majority of votes, the distribution allowed them one third of the seats. Since then an uneasy truce on the communal front has emerged and coalition government has prevailed, though only with the backing of repressive Industrial Relations Legislation (limiting the power of the MMM), and the 1970 Public Order Act and subsequent enactments, which prohibit the publication of seditious, communal and libelous articles (broadly defined) in magazines and newspapers. There is also considerable political influence over the activities of courts of law – inhibiting the prosecution of cases (such as in the defence of the Catholic Confessional Schools) that might provoke communal tension. In many ways, the situation is comparable to that in Bengal, where the rise of the Communist Party of India (M) in the 1960s, a radical but highly pragmatic party (after the Naxalite debacle of 1971), has maintained order in what was formerly was one of the most communally divided parts of India. The current peace in Mauritius is arguably a mere simulacrum of the harmony spoken of in the tourist

brochures, and it most probably prevails despite rather than because of its colonial constitutional and electoral system, and in part due to persistent pressure from the socialist left. More recently still, the sheer prosperity of the island has tended to divert attention away from politics altogether and into the business of making money.

The issue of spatial segregation in the construction of social difference is emphasised in Michael Twaddle's account of the development of communalism in East Africa. He particularly takes issue with historians such as Robert Gregory [1993] and Prem Bhatia [1973], and East African Asian activists such as Yash Ghai who have pointed to 'Asian exclusivity' as a major cause of communal tensions in East Africa. They are describing effects as causes, he argues, and communalism had not always been a feature of East African society. Zanzibar had always been a major entrepot for Indian Ocean trade, but despite the importance of their contribution, the numbers of Asians in East Africa were always limited, and the majority Muslim, up until the 1890s. The migration of South Asians did not really begin to take off until the completion of the Mombasa railway at the beginning of the twentieth century opened up trading opportunities in the interior [Seidenberg 1996]. The British made a point of recruiting Indians (particularly Ramagharian Sikhs) to run the railway, and growing numbers of South Asians, mostly traders from Gujarat, began to arrive, although their numbers never exceeded 1.5 to 2% of the population of the East African protectorates. Social estrangement only began as British officials insisted upon residential segregation in the small towns of eastern and northern Uganda. Segregation was imposed here though upon racial rather than religious grounds, and it was race therefore that became the basis for subsequent conflict. The effects of urban segregation were then further compounded by a policy, underlined by the Devonshire Declaration of 1923, which excluded East African Asians both from rights of equal representation and from rural landholding in African as well as white-settler controlled areas throughout the region. The effect was what Twaddle calls 'urban imprisonment' for south asian capital in East Africa, which for want of outlets elsewhere, was increasingly exported abroad when it could not be invested within the South Asian community. Undoubtedly this practice built upon habits of capital accumulation and circulation for example amongst the Gujarati population within India [e.g. Pocock 1973], but the segregation imposed upon the East African Asian population was extreme, and the social consequences were equally exaggerated. Evidence for the phenomenon is seen in population statistics provided by Gregory [1993, p.17] who states that prior to

independence 49% of Asians in Kenya lived in Nairobi, 36% of Asians in Tanganyika were based in Dar es Salaam, and 27% of Ugandan Asians lived in Kampala, the rest being found scattered among the other major cities. The restriction of immigration by the British after 1944 finally, inhibited the development of an 'Asian' working class to parallel the successful petty bourgeoisie, and the racial stereotype of the acquisitive, conservative middle class Asian community was therefore soon complete. Even then, Twaddle argues, there was nothing inevitable about the persecution of the Asian community from the early 1970's onwards. despite their obvious differences Africans and Asians lived in harmony for or many years and in many ways the history of South Asian communities in East Africa could have turned out very differently.

[INSERT additional section here on the 'twice migrants' ?]

The issue of segregation could not of course be anything but important in South Africa, but the phenomenon of apartheid was but an extreme example of a policy, linked to theories of racial and religious difference, that was put into practice in a variety of colonial situations – most obviously of course in India itself, where under policies first established by the East India Company, white settlers were excluded from farming but in the port cities, mines and plantations the Europeans were given a privileged position, Indian capital on the other hand being largely restricted to rural moneylending for much of the nineteenth century. In every case it was not the migration itself that caused problems, but rather the way in which it was managed by colonial and postcolonial regimes. In South Africa, unlike in East Africa, there was an Indian working class created by a significant population of indentured labourers, brought in between 1860 and 1911. Debates about segregation and repatriation though began in the 1870s, much earlier than in East Africa, partly due to the numbers of the labouring migrants, but also because of the economic success of many Indians vis-à-vis the local white traders. Like John Kelly, Ravi Thiara emphasises that although they may have been collectively constructed by others as 'coolies', 'Arabs' or 'Asiatics', the migrants themselves were a highly diverse group: 70% Hindu, but only 19 per cent Hindi-speaking. Regardless of their class, gender or religion, however, the Indians were subjected to the same institutionalised racist policies, and at the end of the nineteenth century Mahatma Gandhi helped begin the development of a united Indian identity in response to this discrimination and the South African Indian Congress was born. Co-operation between Indians and Africans began in

1947 however with the so-called 'Doctor's Pact'. This was followed soon after however by the 1949 Durban riots, in which were amongst the victims of violence primarily provoked by falling real wages amongst African workers. Rather than causing the government to question its racist policies however, such incidents merely persuaded it to re-affirm them, and the Durban riots were cited as pretext for the introduction of the Group Areas Act in 1950, which segregated the 'communities', as defined by the government, in urban areas and became one of the main pillars of apartheid. Indians were especially affected by this legislation, and lost a great deal of land, especially in Natal. A consequence was a growing social separation of Africans and Indians, making co-operation and understanding greatly more difficult to achieve. Indian opposition to these policies was explicit. The South African Congress rejecting the Department of Indian Affairs set up in 1962, refusing to be represented in such a fashion, and calling for the creation of non-racial government departments, and there was a spectacularly successful organised boycott of the 1983 elections. Comparisons were made with the 1937 elections in India, organised within the communal framework of the 1935 Government of India Act, and in 1984 a United Democratic Front was established between the A.N.C. and I.N.C. in an attempt to overcome racial barriers. Endemic violence though has been the principal legacy of apartheid, and to this day South African Indians are left with a desire to integrate but a continuing sense of fear and beleaguement. After decades of resisting racial segregation some respond ironically by re-affirming their 'Indian' identity and by building new links with the Indian subcontinent. South Africa has thus become a fruitful fund-raising and recruiting ground for organisations such as the Santanan Dharm and the B.J.P. The democratic government's response, in its rhetoric of 'rainbowism', Thiara points out, has arguably done as much to emphasis as to emoliate the weal of racial segregation.

Links with the 'homeland' and associated myths of origin often play a large part in identity formation amongst migrant communities, even though, or perhaps because, as Kelly and Thiara have point out, the actual origins of Indians living overseas can be highly diverse. The experience of migration itself, and secondly any racism to which they are subjected by the indigenous population, are often all that migrants have in common. A selective 'remembering' of the culture and traditions of home is therefore frequently employed to build a sense of community. There is nothing unusual in this, since every population in the world has at some time or other migrated from somewhere else, and

myths of origin are an important part of nationalism and the creation of national identities the world over. These myths, and the migration experience itself, however, play a varying degree of importance in different cultures. The English have a particular fixation with the idea that they are in some senses 'superior' to other races because their borders are secure, their population constant, and their history therefore 'continuous'. This has made the experiences of migrants to the U.K. often very difficult. More than in most other societies they are expected to 'adapt', and determined efforts are made to facilitate this process. The reality of course is very different. The so-called 'English' culture is a congerie of Celtic, Pict, Angle, Saxon, Viking, Norman, Asian, Caribbean, Polish, Italian, Huguenot, French, East European and of course American cultures, and of the different gender biases within each. By selecting from this *mélange* however, a set of ideas is upheld that somehow enshrines the 'exceptionalism' that is held to be 'English'.⁷ This process of selection first began several centuries ago, and still goes on (there is nothing fixed or eternal about it at all). For others, however, the compulsion to develop a sense of a 'national' culture has emerged more recently. In the case of Sri Lanka, Nira Wickramasinghe maintains, the process only began with the advent of colonialism, which occupies an important place in her comprehensive and convincing account of the emergence of a 'Sinhala' identity.⁸

The population of Sri Lanka, like any other, was highly diverse. However, the origins of the island's inhabitants did not become an important issue until British scholars began to speculate about it in the late nineteenth century and to devise hierarchical classifications of various groups according to the historical period in which they are supposed to have come. The Aryan theory of Indo-European origins was a particularly important challenge. As Wickramasinghe explains: 'in pre-colonial Sri Lanka the notion of Arya existed, but Aryan was.. a status obtainable through the performance of meritorious acts'. British physical anthropologists by contrast believed it to be a racial category, enabling the differentiation of the South Asian population into discrete racial groups. A key moment in Sri Lanka, Wickramasinghe suggests, was the translation of the Mahavamsa epic into Sinhalese in the early twentieth century by W. Geiger. This assisted Sinhalese academics, such as K.N. Dharmapala, who linked together colonial racial classifications with the tale of Vijaya's landing on the island in the 6th century B.C., thus providing the myth of a common, superior, Aryan origin for the Sinhalese people. This was far more appealing than depicting them as the descendants of the hordes of the demon-king Ravana (as

depicted in the Ramayana), or any of the many other popular mythic theories of origin that abounded at the time.

The Vijayan myth captured people's imagination and became the kernel of Sinhalese nationalism. At the same time the identity of migrants was defined as everything 'un-Vijayan' by Buddhist revivalists and Sinhalese nationalists such as Anagarika Dharmapala, who were attempting to build community consciousness in the early decades of the twentieth century. Under the strains of the great depression, this negative way of defining Sinhalese nationalism bore fateful fruit in violent encounters between unemployed Sinhalese and groups of migrant workers. Altogether these developments added considerable significance to attempts by the British to devise a constitution for Sri Lanka (or 'Ceylon' as it was then known), based upon their simplistic system of racial classification. The very first scheme was announced in 1909. Demands for the abandonment of communal representation were rejected, and official representatives were in the majority, but there were elected representatives introduced for the Europeans, the 'Burghers', and 'Educated' Ceylonese (including Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims). It was always one of the 'poshest' constitutions: the qualification to vote in these three elections being a pass in a Senior Cambridge Board English Examination, masculinity (of course), and an income of Rs. 1500 per annum. Only 1.8 per cent being therefore eligible to vote. In 1921 the franchise was then greatly widened by allowing a pass in a vernacular examination to count.

The Donoughmore commission promised the next major reform in 1928. Sri Lanka was a relatively prosperous, well educated and egalitarian society, however, and this presented a problem. The franchise must still be a privilege, the granting of which would earn the loyalty of colonial subjects if it was to serve any purpose. Donoughmore proposed therefore a universal adult suffrage, but restricted it to those who could meet a test of residence for more than five years, and who affirmed a willingness to remain and permanently settle on the island. The issue of the various migratory origins of Sri Lanka's population suddenly became a crucial part of the definition of civic rights, and a sharp boundary was created, Wickramasinghe argues, between the Sinhalese, and more recent migratory inhabitants of the island – particularly the Tamil workers on the colonial tea plantations in the highlands. As if this were not enough, middle class Sinhalese nationalists demanded further restrictions including the retention of a specific literacy test

(thereby excluding most Indian workers, as well as many Ceylonese). These were accepted, as well as a clause allowing the vote to anyone who met a property qualification, thus enfranchising every European and the richest Indians. More positively, attempts to restrict the franchise of women were given up (Indian women by contrast did not get the vote until more than 20 years later), but in other respects the Donoughmore constitution was a divisive affair, extending the suffrage exclusively on a simplistic basis of class and ethnicity. Unsurprisingly, class and ethnicity (more than religion, the key feature in Indian constitutional arrangements in the 1930s) have remained the principal points of fracture in Sri Lankan public life ever since, and anti-immigrant violence was a feature in the run up to the 1936 Council Elections. Perhaps still more significantly, Wickramasinghe argues that anti-immigration legislation seemed to many more the sensible and legitimate way forward to deal with the strains on the economy. Sri Lanka thus subsequently introduced stringent restrictions on immigration long before they were even thought of in the U.K. This process of exclusion became yet more virulent in subsequent decades, spawning the Tamil-Sinhalese civil war that presently divides the island.

Processes of prescription and exclusion are prominent as well in the management of ethnic boundaries by the government in colonial Malaysia, discussed in this volume by Amarjit Kaur. There was also a spatial separation of ethnic groups, every bit as pronounced as the East and South Africa. Encouragement was given furthermore to a distinct vocational segmentation of the workforce along ethnic lines. The process of identity construction amongst the Indian 'coolie' migrants who came to work on the sugar, coffee and rubber plantations and government undertaking in the nineteenth century began with their definition by the colonial authorities vis-à-vis their Malayan and Chinese counterparts. Despite this, many became thoroughly 'Malayan' in outlook, and where they looked to India for inspiration, it was 'South Indianness' (whence a large proportion of the migrants came) more than anything else, which became a hall-mark of the Indian community.

Initially, Indian emigration to Malaysia was controlled by a few private recruiting firms, who were able to charge a high level of commission.⁹ For this reason the colonial government stepped in to plan and direct mass Indian migration. Indian labour was preferred because of its alleged docility, a perception probably related to its low cost,

poverty, lack of unionisation and greater dependence on the employer. This was in contrast to the 'surely' Malayan workers who, if they didn't like the working conditions, could more easily go home, or the 'industrious' Chinese who were better organised and were more commonly paid on a work-related basis, rather than a fixed wage.¹⁰ These stereotypes strengthened the case for further Indian immigration, the main purpose and effect of which was to depress wages. The truth of this is shown in the frequent and hardly credible appeals by plantations owners for more indentured labourers on the grounds of 'labour shortage', whilst simultaneously complaining of the desertion of labourers to Chinese enterprises where the pay was better. It was the iron laws of supply and demand to which they objected, not the availability of local labour. A further problem was the monopolisation of Chinese immigration by the Chinese enterprises, especially tin mining. The colonial authorities could not easily access or control this market, yet the Chinese entrepreneurs were major rivals to the Europeans. For this problem indentured Indian labour was the favoured solution, and after the abolition of indenture the kangani system, recruitment by returnee migrants (in exchange for a commission) was followed up until 1938, a similar system to that adopted in other colonial plantation economies, including Mauritius [Carter 1995]. In place of the indenture contract the kangani recruit was tied to his employer by debt, an equally powerful instrument, and the workers were housed in guarded compounds close to the plantations, with the kangani acting as an overseer or foreman. The workers were unskilled when recruited, and schooling and training was completely unknown until the 1930s, when the government was pressured into giving some grants for education (which did not though advance beyond the age of six). For this reason the Indian labourers, whilst a minority, were also always less mobile, were largely confined to rural districts, and were to be found in the lowest paid and lowest status occupations, even after the end of World War II. Prejudices against them were compounded by the fact that they were treated, and regarded, as transients, despite the growing numbers of second and third generation Indo-Malaysians resident by the 1930s.

An additional problem faced by the Indian migrants was their poor gender balance. Unlike in Mauritius, employers felt no urgent necessity to develop a viable self-sustaining local population of Indians, fewer women were therefore recruited, and the Indians were far slower to develop communities than, for example, the immigrant

Chinese, who by 1945 accounted for 45 per cent of the population against the Indian 10 per cent.

Amarjit Kaur argues that it was relatively late in the day that the Indian migrants began to organise and develop the sort of solidarity commonly seen amongst Chinese workers, and initially at least the initiative for political representation came from urban Indians, who had little in common with the plantation workers. Arguably though self-assertion was already present on the plantations, its existence simply being suppressed and ignored by the hegemonic racial discourse of colonialism. Sabotage, false compliance, desertion and heavy drinking, were all commonplace in the plantations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, all of which could be regarded as forms of resistance to the brutality of working conditions, although this usually was unrecognised. Thus in 1912 a riot on a Penang plantation was blamed without further enquiry on the ethnic origin of the workforce who were described as 'an exceptionally bad class of labourer' [Ramaswamy, 1992, p. 102].

The earliest Indian Association in Malaysia was founded in 1906. These were generally 'loyal' middle class organisations. The 1920's however saw a remarkable rise in working class Indian consciousness, resulting in a wave of strikes - most notably those of 1927 in the railways depots and other public works, and in 1937-40 on the Penang waterfront, to the extent that the British resorted to using troops to control the pickets [Sandhu, 1993]. By far the largest strike was that in the Batu Arang Colliery in 1937, which saw Indian workers joining with Chinese in protest. Most of these strikes were successful: for example in 1938 when European planters imposed a uni-lateral wage cut on Indian workers, mass striking won wage concessions. Furthermore, whilst few Indians joined the Malayan Communist Party, the growth in striking fostered a link between Indians and the trade unions, in particular the General Labour Union, which played a prominent role in post-war politics.

Self-assertion can also be seen in the growth of a Dravidian revivalist movement opposed to caste prejudice (important, since one third of the Tamil migrants came from untouchable castes), and a reform movement promoting the education of the younger generation [Arasaratnam 1970, 1993]. As 'Dravidianism' became a force within the ranks of the Malayan Indian Congress it increasingly found a following among rural Indians.

And although there was support for the (predominantly north Indian) Indian National Congress, and especially for Bose's Indian National Army during World War II, there was also a cultural and political distance, highlighted by Jawaharlal Nehru, who on a visit in 1950 urged the Indians to think less of India and to do more to contribute to Malaysian national life. This encouraged the M.I.C. to develop ties with other Malayan political parties, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) and the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), with whom they formed a united front to contest the federal elections in 1955. Thus the qualities of 'unIndianness' within the I.M.C., much as with the South African Indian Congress, facilitated the creation of alliances with indigenous political parties – a remarkable outcome in the light of the segregationary practices of the colonial regime. In the wake of the violence of the Malaysian Communist insurgency in the early 1950s, and ethnic riots in 1969, the need for unity remained an important feature on the political agenda in independent Malaysia. It is only since independence furthermore that religion has become a divisive issue, the 'Islamicisation' of the Malaysian nation, provoking anxiety amongst indigenous Chinese and Hindus. Given past precedents, Kaur implies, there are grounds for optimism that the cause of these anxieties may be overcome, yet ethnicity, in-built as it was in the very framework of the economy, is likely to remain an important line of fissure in the Malaysian body politic.

A space for Indians within Malaysian society is being created, but it is probably as much a process of recognising the positive developments that have already taken place as it is a matter of hopes for the future. The recovery of another voice, that of Indian females in Caribbean society, is the concern of Samita Chatterjee's paper. All too often she argues traditional historical scholarship has focussed on public sphere activities, overlooking or simply ignoring the vitality of the private sphere. The private sphere though plays an important role, Chatterjee, argues, in reinventing an imagined space and locale, particularly in cases of exile and resettlement. As Clifford has argued 'Life for women in diasporic situations can be doubly painful – struggling with the material and spiritual insecurities of exile, with the demands of family and work, and with the demands of old and new patriarchies' [1997, p.259]. Within the private sphere female spaces are therefore especially important sites of contestation and they can be arenas of empowerment and identity affecting the entire community. Historically however the stereotyping of indentured Indian women in the Caribbean and elsewhere has been extremely negative, the women who travelled on independent contracts of work often

being depicted as ‘immoral, streetwise prostitutes’. Oral sources however suggest very different and far more positive roles for women, as story-tellers, and transmitters of culture, language and folk-lore, as well as bread-earners for their families. In this role, Chatterjee suggests, women could be highly inventive: merging and generating new traditions in order to help build a sense of community.¹¹ As evidence of this she refers to Muslim marriage ceremonies, in which Indian women took a leading role as organisers, and which contained not only the traditional nikah ceremony with the Imam presiding, but elements of singing and dancing which were clearly borrowed from Hindu rituals. Such exchanges of religious ritual and practices were common, and in Trinidad in the days of indenture, and even into contemporary times it is not unusual to find persons with different religious leanings as members of the same family. Immigrant culture was commonly syncretic, as Indian immigrants occupied a narrow space on the border between the white plantations and black peasant societies. Improvisation and creativity, as well as the maintenance of tradition, were therefore necessary for survival. Today these informal gestures have given way to more formal attempts to develop a national culture. And the discourse on women since the end of indenture has turned to emphasising the character of ‘the ideal woman’ based on an imagined and invented purity of a ‘classical Indian culture and patriarchy’. Remembering the innovative role of women in the early days of migration Chatterjee argues, can play an important role in shaping the form and content of these struggles. Her paper also suggests that inquiries into identity formation can proceed at various levels and using a variety of sources, of which often we investigate but a few: private and female spaces being most commonly amongst those omitted.

A more paradoxical case, of post-Partition migration within the Indian subcontinent, is addressed by Karen Leonard and Mohammad Waseem. Leonard and Wash examine the fate of the so-called ‘Mohajirs’ – urdu speaking Muslims from Hyderabad the north of India who settled in the new state of Pakistan after 1947. Ostensibly one might have thought that Islam being the basis of the new state all Muslim migrants from India would be equally welcome and integrated more or less on the same basis. The papers by Leonard and Waseem however demonstrate that psychological responses and outcomes of migration can vary greatly depending on the material and social circumstances. Before 1971 Mohajirs constituted about 10 per cent of Pakistan’s population, but after the break-away of Bangladesh in 1971 this rose to 20 per cent. Many arrived as refugees in 1947 or

soon after, but throughout the 1960's, '70s and '80s their numbers were increased by cross-border marriages with Muslims remaining on the Indian side. Those who migrated from Punjab to Pakistan integrated quite successfully, but those who came from further afield, from Bihar and north India, or the former independent princely state of Hyderabad, had more difficulties

The label 'Mohajir', Karen Leonard points out, is a value-laden term, evoking the escape or exile of the prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina. She investigates these meanings and many other aspects of the migratory experience using historical sources and the richly evocative and important resource of oral interviews conducted with migrants from all walks of life over the course of several years.¹² Some Mohajirs she spoke with took great pride in their migrant identity, pointing out their elective choice to live in Pakistan, rather than the fact that they were merely borne there. Others however, and especially the migrants from Hyderabad, were uncomfortable with the label, preferring to preserve their identity as Hyderabadis, or to integrate themselves as Pakistanis – an attempt which is not always welcomed. Integration has been made more difficult by the Pakistani government's practice of enumerating them in the census as a separate ethnic group, a practice which has encouraged Mohajirs to regard themselves in this light. Hyderabadis were often highly educated and as migrants, like other Mohajirs, tended to be economically successful. This has fuelled a great deal of prejudice against them, and against which they have reacted, all of which Leonard describes. Despite this, the Hyderabadis have remained relatively apolitical and have kept their distance from the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM), preferring, apparently, anonymity rather than association with an organisation increasingly known latterly for its militancy and violence. More seriously, they reason that representing Mohajirs as an ethnic group demanding a territorial base cannot but end in disappointment and defeat. Instead, many are opting out and attempting to escape the Mohajir identity: 'they have transformed their identities in other ways, ways different from each other and ways which are more promising for themselves and for Pakistan'. This they can achieve through marriage, or by adopting a regional or metropolitan culture already extant. Thus, rather like Kelly's Indo-Fijian's, many Hyderabadi Mohajirs apparently choose anonymity and self-effacement, rather than representing themselves as any sort of migrant, if this means adopting an ethnic stance comparable to and in opposition to other groups in Pakistani society.

Mohammed Waseem traces the Mohajir ‘problem’ from its inception pointing out how many Mohajirs sought to identify the Pakistani nation with the wider Islamic world, interpreting the two-nation theory as giving the Indian Muslims the right to emigrate to Pakistan and ignoring provincial loyalties within the country. By these ideological means Mohajirs made a place for themselves within the new state, the unity of which was highly important to them. This all started to come apart after 1970 when the rise of regionalism split the western and eastern halves of Pakistan apart. ‘Territorial nationalism pushed aside ideological nationalism as the dominant mode of thinking’ and in West Pakistan the Indus valley and Punjabi origins of Pakistani civilization were increasingly emphasised, at the expense of Indo-Muslim civilization, thereby marginalising the Mohajirs. Simultaneously the accession to power of the Pakistani People’s Party in Western Pakistan, a populist party committed to the goal of preserving Sindhi culture against the perceived onslaught of Mohajirs ‘spelt doom for the cherished world view of the migrant elite rooted in a unitarian model of politics.’ In response to the popular four cultures identification of Pakistan – Sindhi, Punjabi, Baluch and Pakhtun – Mohajirs then felt entitled to create their own sub-nationalism, centred in Karachi and Sindh. Interestingly although they inevitably became rivals, this rivalry did not preclude the possibility of co-operation between the MQM and PPP against the even greater threat from upcountry Baluchs and Pakhtun migrants in Karachi, against whom they formed an electoral alliance in 1988. This alliance was however a brief lived phenomenon, and relationships between the MQM and PPP in Sindh have been marked ever since by violence, terrorism and periodical interventions by the military in an attempt to restore order. Most recently the MQM have common to agreements with the Nawaz Sharif governments and have formed coalition governments in Islamabad and Karachi, indicating a move away from violent confrontation. Ethnic sub-nationalism seems likely to remain the entrenched position of the organisation however for some years to come.¹³

The interesting paradox of the ethnic nationalism of Mohajirs in Pakistan, as described by Mohammed Waseem, is that it is a non-elite movement, which is not built upon a primordial association with the land. It is a curious example, though not so far removed from others we have seen, of the rise of an ethnic community on the basis of not belonging to the well-defined and pre-existing communities of the region. Waseem further emphasises that in explaining its rise we ought not over-emphasise the role of the

state, as in Pakistan, as in many other third world countries, 'the state's policies do not incorporate large sectors of public and private activity where patterns of interaction at the local level create new interpersonal, inter-sectoral and inter-ethnic conflicts'. The classical theories concerning the formation of ethnic nationalism, the primordialist and the instrumentalist (as defined by Brass), in which the state and elite competition play an important role, do not therefore exactly fit. Instead, a whole series of complex changes, ranging from the Afghanistan war to indigenous revival in Punjab and Sindh, as well as sectoral and demographic changes, appear to be responsible for the rise of Mohajir nationalism.¹¹

The case of the Mohajirs is thus influenced by a variety of internal and external factors, and perhaps well illustrates the need for a 'fuzzier' approach to the history of communities and the shaping of nationalist movements, as Partha Chatterjee and John Kelly have argued. Equally interesting is the fact that at any point Mohajir-Sindhi rivalry might well have been averted. The whole issue arose not as a result of the activities of the state, but due to its inactivities, and its failure on several counts to secure the legal rights of individuals and property. Ethnicity therefore only emerged as an alternative basis on which to defend these interests once the Pakistani state had proven itself insufficient to the task.

The role of 'external' factors in identity formation is further highlighted in Thomas Hanson's anthropological account of 'migrant culture' in contemporary Bombay, although the focus of his paper is not on the migrants so much as those left behind, and the impact that remittances and the returnee migrants have on the culture 'at home'. The home in question is Nagpada, a densely populated low-income neighbourhood adjoining large mill-district in central Bombay where Hanson stayed between 1996 and 1997. Hanson's purpose is to identify the affects of 'globalization' and of 'global horizons' on the world view of this local community, but as a 'community' he points out that it has many diverse elements. Muslims in Bombay are not a homogenous group. The oldest Muslim residents of Bombay are the small, wealthy trading families of Bohras, Khojas and Memons who have a centuries old tradition of migration in and around the Indian Ocean region. There is a primary contradiction between these older, religiously deviant groups, and later migrants from the north of India, the heartland of Indo-Muslim tradition, who came to work in the cotton mills and other industries in the 1920s. They

included unemployed weavers (ansaris) amongst their number. These U.P.ites were preceded by migrants from the Konkan and Deccan, and followed by migrants from South India, and from impoverished Bihar – an inward flow that continues to this day. Linguistically and culturally these Muslims were poles apart, but Hanson argues, the notion of *a* Muslim community has been forced upon them by the assertion of aggressive Hindu politics since the mid- 1980s, and especially since the anti-Muslim riots in the city in 1993. A process of that might be called ‘negative assimilation’ might therefore be said to have taken place, Muslims of various backgrounds throwing in their lot together owing to the breakdown of relations with neighbouring Hindus, and for reasons of self-defence. The creation of a single Muslim community has also been generated more simply by the burning and destruction of outlying Muslim suburbs within Hindu majority areas. This has forced refugees into the largely Muslim quarters and has created a clearer spatial segregation of Hindus and Muslims within the city than has ever existed before. Hanson also argues that a sense of unity has also been generated by the practice of the police and state authorities treating the Muslims as a unified security problem and collective threat to civic order.

Interestingly, and perhaps encouragingly, Hanson did not, however, find that their fraught relationships with neighbouring Hindus was necessarily the most important element in Muslim identity formation. Within the Muslim community there are movements of purification and religious revivalism, which are inward looking or have developed primarily with reference to wider currents within Islam. Hindus not taken seriously as a threat, being regarded as the mere pawns of ‘big society’, the Government, the Congress or even the U.S.A. Instead, the most important force in local identity formation appeared to be what Hanson describes as ‘the local hierarchies of status and power’. These hierarchies include religious leaders, social workers (*dada*’s) and local politicians. But within these local hierarchies of power, the rise of a lucrative migrant stream for the purposes of labouring abroad, primarily in the middle east, also plays an important role. Those with family members abroad, or who themselves have worked abroad, enjoy a prosperity and status, or at least a status, within the local identity-economy, that can exceed even that of the ‘old’ Bombay, or the more successful labouring families who have nonetheless stayed at home. Travel to the middle east in particular, the birth-place of Islam, even if no trip to Mecca is involved, is considered an act of great heroism and to be like an on-going Haj: a source of erudition and education denied to those who have

stayed at home. By travel, Hanson argues, Muslim Bombayites affirm their membership of a global Muslim civilization and uphold Muslim claims to be cosmopolitan 'men of the world'. To substantiate this status., Hanson discovered many if his ex-migrant informants to be great raconteurs, peddling tales of their experiences far more impressive than the reality. Recurrent myths of the wealth of Muslims in the middle east, and the depravity of Western, Christian civilisation were often expounded as well. This 'world view' seemed to many far important that denouncing local Hindu politicians, or even their Hindu neighbours, with whom they only lately been they had been bloodily at war.

The economic impact of migration, even though it is now on the decline, is an important part of the status effect, as the families of returning migrants often enjoyed far more independence. However, unlike with the Bangladeshi migrants studied by Gardener [1995], amongst whom the 'londoni' families with relatives in Britain and the Gulf enjoyed unusual influence and prestige (often becoming and being considered more 'devout' Muslims as a consequence), migration for Bombay-wallahs is clearly not the only means to material advancement. Nonetheless, migrant families can usually afford a variety of status goods, including better education for their children (in English medium, and at the Madrassah for Koranic studies), and the Haj itself, which is often denied to their neighbours. This can greatly increase not only their material but their religious standing. Hanson ends his study by concluding: 'The Muslims in Bombay are today clearly in search of recognition, not necessarily from Hindus, nor from the forces of Hindu nationalism whom they refuse to recognise as their 'others' in spite of the fact that these movements rule both city and state'.

The positive aspect of the Bombay example is that it suggests that Hindu-Muslim identities may not perhaps been fashioned in India in opposition to one another during the past century to the extent suggested in many academic studies [e.g. Van der Veer, 1996]. There has undoubtedly been much violence between Muslims and Hindus in India during the 1980s and 1990s, and the very real threat of war between India and Pakistan hangs over the continent. Nonetheless, the framework of a rigid racial division of labour (by caste, tribe ethnicity or religion), unequal representation, and political manipulation imposed by colonial regimes in the early part of this century, the antinomies of nationalism post independence, simple economic competition in more recent decades, and the pressures of globalization, have all played a part. These might all

be considered wholly exogenous and contingent factors, subject to change and not everywhere having the same effect, or the same response: a point that is shown in the great variety in processes of identity formation, many of them not as confrontational as one might suppose, highlighted by the papers in this volume.

The final contribution to this volume, by Aminah Mohammed, presents a situation still further removed from the classical circumstance of Hindu-Muslim rivalry within the Indian sub-continent. Or so it might seem at first glance. After all, is not the U.S.A. the most modern of societies, certainly the most prosperous, and by its constitution, theoretically egalitarian and liberal? The reality of course is that the U.S. is not in every instance a melting pot that subsumes identities, but a nation that imposes an additional abstract loyalty, to the flag and constitution¹⁴, upon them. The U.S. may be extremely prosperous, but it is also one of the most economically competitive, unequal and (one must say) violent of societies. Where competition is rife, self-defence through the development of communities, community solidarity and extended family relations will be conspicuous. Unsurprisingly, therefore, identification through association, whether it be the West Richmond angling society, Latino-American political organisations, gangs, nationwide lobbies, or religion is probably more pronounced in the U.S.A. than in any other society. It even enjoys semi-official sanction, as for example at the Los Angeles Festival of 1991 [described in Clifford, 1997, p. 258], and it is only held in check by what Aminah Mohammed refers to as an ideology of civic religion, or 'idolatrous nationalism'. One ought also emphasise within this the phenomenon of American individualism, especially pronounced among the middle classes, which also abounds and holds in check the range and scope of associations¹⁵. Hence one encounters paradoxes such as Waco fundamentalists abandoning their families, and giving themselves and all they possess to a highly disciplined 'community' in pursuit of spiritual and material freedom – a phenomenon only elsewhere encountered amongst the long-since declined monastic orders of Europe and Asia. Within this context wholly new and different sets of pressures impinge upon immigrant groups of Asians

Migrants from South Asia first began to arrive in the U.S.A. in considerable numbers in the 1960s following a liberalisation of immigration policies. Today there are more than a million, and since immigration policy has been biased towards the educated and qualified, they have been among the more successful of America's citizens. Aminah

Mohammed makes the point that although the United States is officially a secular country, its interpretation of secularism, whilst separating State and religion, enjoins that equal respect be given to all religions (this is not far removed from the Indian idea of *sarva dharma saramabhava*). Both Muslims and Hindus in the U.S.A. are therefore given considerable freedom, even encouragement, in the exercise of their beliefs¹⁶. Because of this, and because South Asians in the U.S. are very scattered, one might imagine that, in this land of immigration, the relatively prosperous communities of Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis might have found a way of living with each other, a *modus vivendi*, far removed from the conflicts and tensions of the subcontinent. Mohammed concludes. however, that this is far from being the case.

Aminah Mohammed points to a wide ranges of prejudices and the labyrinthine growth of associations. There are conflicts particularly over the issue of language. Urdu and Hindi are used as markers of difference, particularly among Muslims (for whom it can be a symbol of their religious devotion), and many South Asians will insist on speaking to other South Asians in Urdu or Hindi, regardless where there come from. Most Hindus are in fact from Gujarat or Punjab. A rift has thus developed between the Hindi/Urdu speaking North Indians and the South Indians, who never meet together in the same associations: 'the controversy over the domination of Hindi thus seems to linger in the diaspora'. Amongst north Indians, the Hindus and Muslims meet in separate associations, whilst amongst Muslims, Hyderabadis and those from a Muhajir background are also to be found, as in modern Pakistan, to be keeping apart from one another and meeting in separate elite associations

Mohammed highlights particularly the role of community leaders, and holds them responsible for much of the animosity, though arguably these rifts might still fit within classical instrumentalist theories of communalism. Thus to begin with, one might point out that prosperity is not the same thing as economic security. The U.S. is a highly mobile and competitive society where expectations are high. Economic opportunities fluctuate, albeit at a generally much higher level than in other societies, and these South Asian communities will inevitably at times find themselves at times as economic rivals. However, an interesting point about these divisions is that they are not primarily, it seems, religious. Any number of geographical or linguistic bases might be found for the creation of a new association, but Hinduism and Islam do not have a monolithic function,

overdetermining this process. Thus Indians will even shun Hindus from the Caribbean, questioning their 'Indianness', whilst Hindus from African origins will be accepted as equals. Mohammed suggests that there is probably a class dimension to this, as Indians in the Caribbean were usually recruited as labourers, whilst those in Africa were more commonly from trading classes.

Amidst the *mêlée* of competing associations, the prospects for co-operation may seem limited, however Aminah Mohammed predicts that some sort of South Asian Pan-Ethnicity will eventually emerge, comparable to that seen among Afro-Americans and Chinese Americans. Evidence for is to be seen already in annual events such as the Indian Day parades on August 15th, which are commonly attended by South Asians from every background - although conspicuous attempts have made to exclude gays, and some South Asian Muslims have occasionally boycotted the event. The prospects for a South Asian pan-ethnicity also seem to be strongest amongst the second and third generation offspring from migrant families, who culturally have more in common, not least of all the American language. Within the U.K., where South Asian communities have been established for rather longer, this development has already begun to take place. The principal obstacle is that lack of an appropriate vocabulary (the term 'South Asian' itself being unrecognised both by the migrant and host societies), but the English language, film and popular music have all provided a means of communication that transcends communal boundaries. Aminah Mohammed highlights in particular the contributions of musicians such as the late Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, who achieved a following throughout South Asia and particularly among Asian communities abroad. The phenomenon of neo-bhangra has also become a musical means of expressing South Asian identity, albeit in a male-dominated idiom, that is truly 'post-colonial', borrowing from every culture, and transcending ethno-religious boundaries. Examples that can be mentioned include the Asian Dub Foundation, Naseeb and Fun-Da-Mental, largely U.K. based bands but which also have a considerable following in the U.S.A. There is also of course the Bollywood movie industry, the stars of which enjoy a following in all parts of Asia and amongst every South Asian community abroad, and Pakistani bands such as Junoon, which have crossed the border in the opposite direction (they are now almost permanent expatriates owing to Pakistani censorship), winning a substantial following amongst Indian youth. In such ways, as Clifford [1997] and Bhabha [1990] have argued, old and new diasporas can offer the resources for emergent postcolonial identities.

Conclusion

From one point of view a South Asian pan-identity does not need to be discovered, so much as RE-discovered. There are those who would maintain that such an identity was present in pre-modern times [Jalal & Bose, 1998], and from the late nineteenth century there is evidence of high levels of mobility, and of the internationalisation of many South Asian migrants, from both working and middle class origins [Bates, forthcoming]. Arguably, pre-modern society was always more fluid: it was the colonial period itself which saw a rigidification of custom and occupational specialisation, and of concomitant identities [Bates & Carter, 1994; Washbrook 1996].¹⁷ Migration overseas was a means of escaping the increasingly inflexible and under-employed Indian labour market, and amongst those migrant workers, many had become highly cosmopolitan by the end of the colonial period, with Indians abroad commonly raising their status, economically and socially, and being 're-borne' into a world free of caste, if not all forms of discrimination.¹⁸ In the process new identities were constructed to enable them to bridge the gap between the old and the new worlds and to maintain their links with both. Sadly, the legacy of conflict immediately before, during and after the decolonisation process, has commonly marred the relationship between South Asian communities, and between themselves and the indigenous populations. The growth of postcolonial national identities has also commonly involved a process of definition by exclusion that has impacted negatively upon migrant groups, Sri Lanka and East Africa being here the most conspicuous examples.

Conflict between migrants themselves and between migrants and indigenous communities are not caused by the migration per se, but by prevailing popular conceptions of racial difference. There are many examples available from history where such conceptions of difference do not exist, or where they nonetheless readily admit the incorporation of 'outsiders'. Likewise, the identity of migrant South Asians has often been re-interpreted in ways that overcome social barriers commonly encountered within the subcontinent, as well as facilitating integrative relationships with indigenous populations. However, identities cannot exist in a vacuum as a product of will, nor are they solely created from elements drawn from identities of the past. The papers in this volume suggest that although the agency and inventiveness of migrants is characteristic

and vital, identities must be sustained and maintained by definitive structures of legal identification and representation. Contrarily these same structures can work as well over time to undermine established unities of consciousness and generate processes of division. The evolution of laws, constitutions and political assemblies, and the segregation of communities, spatially and in their relationship to economies and the political process are therefore a vital part in the history of identity formation. The imperial legacy in all these areas has often been profound, imperial institutions enshrining caste, class, race and religion as the boundaries of South Asian communities often having had important long-term effects.

There has been resistance to colonial identifications, and the evolution of communities and national identities has continued apace since the independence of the former colonial territories. An important influence has been that of globalisation, and the emergence of postcolonial, transnational identities [Appadurai, 1996]. But equally conspicuous has been the neo-nationalist response, normalising cultural traditions, and re-inventing once more the spiritual and moral claims of nationalism. The past half decade, in particular, has seen the re-institutionalisation of religious communal differences in South Asia and elsewhere. In India this has been seen in the resurgence of avowedly Hindu political organisations such as Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Shiva Sena and the Bharatiya Janata Party. In response to this the Indian government has shown signs of giving up its secular stance in favour of initiatives that harmonise church and state. If communal forces are becoming politically organised, the only way this can be dealt with is by rejecting its presence in a secular state, or going down the road of adopting a state religion. India has for some while been wavering between these two positions [Bhargava 1998], but for the first time, significant moves have been made in the late 1990s towards the institutionalisation of Hinduism itself. These signs include the setting up of an all India committee of Shankacharyas to provide leadership in matters of religious dispute affecting the Hindu faith. Legally the state in India is committed to a secular and bipartisan position, although even here there are signs of this commitment wavering, with interference in the judiciary, undermining of the electoral commission and persistent abuse of the emergency constitutional power of 'President's rule', which has been invoked on more than a dozen occasions (?) in the past decade to suspend elected state assemblies.

Given the direction in which India is moving, and the fact that there seem at present to be few ominous consequences arising from the Mauritius practice of sustainable communalism, the question must be asked has India's secular constitution and its independent judiciary been more of a hindrance than an advantage in resolving communal differences? Or alternatively, are countries like Mauritius treading a potentially hazardous tightrope? One might conclude that the crucial factor in communal conflicts is not juridicable rights, since inequalities between people on the basis of religion and the conflicts that might arise cannot necessarily be resolved by resort to constitutional reforms or judicial measures when at base their source is economic or class based inequalities (as is often the case). The fundamental difference remains that although India has guaranteed the rights of minorities in legal terms, these guarantees do not extend into the areas of economics and the government has failed to provide even a minimum of subsistence for those at the bottom of the socio-economic pile [Galanter 1994]. Indeed latterly it has to some extent washed its hands of these responsibilities by embarking on a programme of liberalisation and privatisation and by dismantling its planning regime, albeit reluctantly, and partly at the behest of external advisers and authorities such as the I.M.F. The resulting upsurge in popular discontent has then been magnified by India's centralised, and inflexible first-past-the-post political system. In Mauritius by contrast, although economic inequalities exist, minimum standards of living can be and have been more easily ensured thereby mitigating differences and conflicts between communities. In the long term one might speculate that harmony is best ensured by constitutions or at least political practices that include in their definition of basic human rights, and are compelled to maintain in practice, a minimum of economic security and opportunity. In conclusion it may be suggested that the state needs to act as an arbiter of economic as well as political and social conflicts. An effective democratic political and judicial system can go some way towards redressing emergent conflicts, but it is the conspicuous failure of India to address the former of those three that has perhaps led above all to the disintegration of its former secular consensus. Ideologically, however, there remains a further issue to consider, as some would argue that so-called 'post-colonialism' is merely one of neo-colonialism's new hegemonic ideological forms. Just as colonialism spawned national movements of liberation, so globalisation, and 'faux' post-colonialism can be said at the moment to be spawning their own neo-nationalist responses, intellectually and in practical terms. Whether true or not, no developing nation can arguably yet claim to be free from the partitions and ideological legacies of

colonialism, as third world debt and the continuing military stand-off between India and Pakistan, 50 years after independence, attest. A genuine pan-South Asian ethnicity, that could realistically begin to address the material and spiritual inequalities of the subcontinent and its satellite communities throughout the globe, may therefore be an ambition that awaits a different generation, and a different set of circumstances, to that of the present for an opportunity to be expressed.

ENDNOTES

¹ Gunesequera, Romesh, Reef, London: Granta, 1978, p. 174

² It is noticeable, that while police authorities are enjoined to consult with local 'community leaders' representative of Black, Asian, Muslim, Afro-Caribbean, and occasionally Gay and Lesbian 'communities', these leaders are not adopted through any constitutional or elective process but at the whim of officials. By contrast it is never felt necessary to single out and consult 'white' community leaders in this fashion since they form an almost absolute majority of elected members in local and national government. Not a single Muslim M.P., for example, had been elected to the U.K. Parliament until 1997 when Mohammed Salwar was elected to the constituency of Glasgow Govan – upon which he was immediately accused of electoral malpractice

³ Peter van der Veer in Nation and Migration [1995], p. 7, comments: 'Whereas the diaspora of others fortifies the sense of belonging among the established, one's own diaspora tends to strengthen the longing to be elsewhere'. To this one might add that those for whom migration was in some sense involuntary, feelings of attachment to the homeland are likely to be still more intense.

⁴ For a general overview of this developing field see Ronaldo Munck, 1988; and Robin Cohen, c.1991 and 1996.

⁵ See also Kelly, 1991 and 1992.

⁶ This discussion is partly based upon the author/editor's own first-hand observations in 1996 for which I must acknowledge the support from travel grants awarded by the University of Edinburgh's Hayter and Travel and Research Funds and a generous grant from the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland.

⁷ A recent British Prime-minister famously summed up 'Englishness' as being to do with family life and a sense of fairness, born out going to church and playing cricket on rural village greens on lazy Sunday afternoons. Unfortunately, it was pointed out, nobody lives in the country, or goes to church, or plays cricket (let alone on a village green), whilst a great many now work on Sundays and have no time for leisure sports. To be English today in fact is to eat Indian curry, Italo-American Pizza and American beef-burgers, to drink too much German and Danish Lager, to watch American films, to be prudish about sex, and to play or watch football, obsessively. Only perhaps the last two, in their abysmal fashion, can be claimed to be at all unique and authentic. The author, I should confess, cannot trace his ancestry very far, but in the recent past has Irish, Scottish and, more remotely, Huguenot ancestors. He is therefore thoroughly miscegenated and can claim in no way to be 'exceptional'.

⁸ For further details see Wickramasinghe, 1995.

⁹ See Kaur, 1997.

¹⁰ A 1920's work of physical anthropology The Races of Man by Professor Ralph Bennet Bean (University of Virginia Press, 19??, p. ??), states that the Malayan worker had an unusual psychological disorder known as 'running amok' whereby they would lay about anyone they could reach with a machete in a towering fit of rage. Others might regard this an appropriate response to the harsh and brutal conditions pertaining on many colonial enterprises in Malaya at the time, but such stereotypes had the effect of rendering the supposed 'docility' of the indentured Indian workers all the more apparent.

¹¹ An excellent example of the revisionary writing of the history of indentured Indian women, in this case in Mauritius, is to be found in Carter, 1994. The role of the private sphere in maintaining Caribbean Indian identity is also discussed in Kale, 1999.

¹² Karen Leonard has conducted a similar highly evocative study of Punjabi Sikh migrant identity in California. See Leonard 199 ???

¹³ For a more detailed study of Pakistani politics see Waseem 1994.

¹⁴ Aminah Mohammed refers to the concept of civil religion or a kind 'idolatrous nationalism' as the binding force within the U.S.A.

¹⁵ Perhaps the classic text on this phenomenon is by Samuel Huntington [1981], who argues that American identity is constituted in normative terms (the values of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence) rather than in organic/existential terms of culture or language. Because the values in the Constitution conflict without a lexical ordering in priority, Americans can however appeal to the same document to justify opposing ends. Conflict is thus the child of consensus on fundamental values. Taking a perhaps extreme view Huntington implies that without the framework of law provided by the Constitution, American society would collapse into a congerie of separate communities at war with one another. (I am grateful to Rob Singh for this reference).

¹⁶ Another important work on the relationship between religion and identity formation amongst South Asian migrants in the U.S.A. is by Lise McKean, 1996.

¹⁷ An unusual evocation of the cosmopolitan culture of the pre-modern Indian ocean is offered in a hybrid work of ethnography and history by Amitav Ghosh [1992], discussed in Clifford, 1997. See also Chaudhuri, 1985.

¹⁸ Peter Emmer and Brij V. Lal are among the most enthusiastic advocates of the liberating effects of migration, critiqued in Bates & Carter, 1994.